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More CIA Subsidies

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The shocking disclosure that the National Student Association, the largest group of its kind in the United States, was subsidized by the Central Intelligence Agency from the early 1950s until last year, is cause again to wonder just how widespread CIA domestic activities really are. Less than a year ago it was revealed that Michigan State University provided support and cover for the CIA in Vietnam from 1955 to 1959.

There were intimations in the MSU situation that the school got caught in a sort of CIA web before it knew precisely what it was doing. But according to Eugene Groves, president of the student association, the officers of the association approached the CIA and asked for help, which was tendered in the form of as much as \$200,000 a year. Mr. Groves said the student association at no time served any "intelligence function," and that the money was used mainly to finance the association's international activities.

According to Mr. Groves, the CIA subsidy was sought because the officers of the association "felt that the existence of heavily financed and totally controlled Soviet front organizations in the international student field made it imperative that democratic and progressive organizations maintain a presence abroad which would offer an alternative." What the officers apparently failed to comprehend was that their organization was no longer democratic and progressive if subsidized by the CIA, and was no better than the Soviet groups.

It is no wonder that seemingly harmless operations by official and unofficial United States agencies are so widely suspect abroad, probably unfairly so in many instances. When the hand of the CIA is revealed as in the student case, a scandal ensues. Transmission of CIA funds was kept secret by channeling them through two foundations to the student association. How many more foundations are CIA fronts?

We do not know how much the CIA got for its money, if anything. The story is that the association terminated the relationship because "conditions changed" and no longer justified the "covert relationship." Maybe that is not the whole story, as the association, which has chapters on more than 300 campuses, has often differed with Administration policy. In the last year it has opposed the draft and has been critical of American involvement in Vietnam.

But the issue is not the judgment of the National Student Association leaders, but whether the free-wheeling CIA has the right to conduct clandestine operations of this nature. It is another argument for stricter congressional supervision of the CIA.

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